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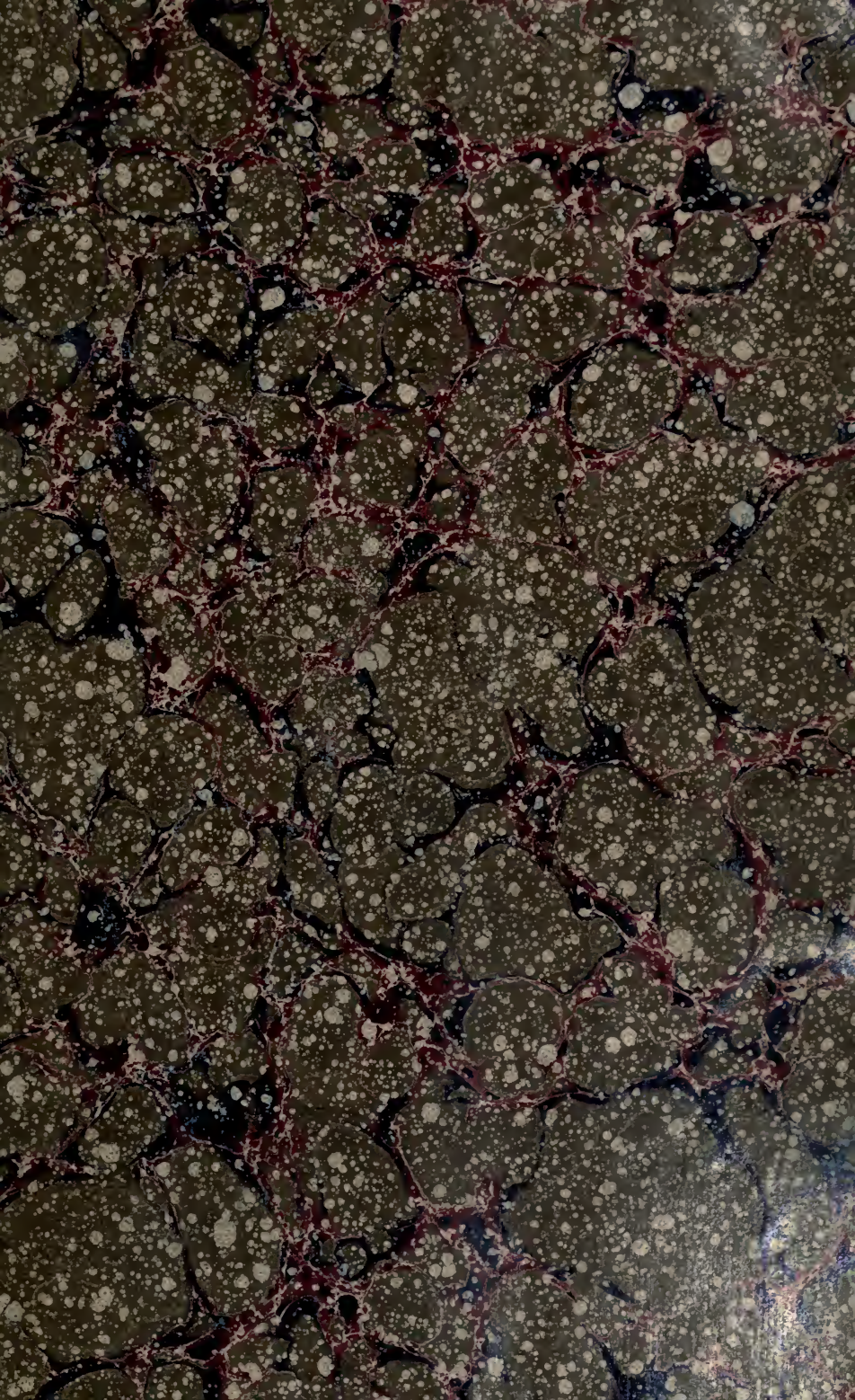

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MEMORIAL

OF

JOHN C. PHILLIPS.

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN C. PHILLIPS.

BY

REV. EDWARD G. PORTER.

WITH THE

REMARKS OF HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP,

AND OTHER TRIBUTES.

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MEMOIR.

JOHN CHARLES PHILLIPS, Jr., son of the Rev. John Charles and Harriet Welch Phillips, was born in Boston Oct. 21, 1838, in his grandmother Phillips's house, on the spot where the Beacon Street Athenæum now stands. He was a grandson of John Phillips the first mayor of Boston, a nephew of Wendell Phillips, a great-grandson of William Phillips the Revolutionary patriot, and a descendant of George Phillips the first minister of Watertown, who came to this country in the "Arbella" in 1630. His father, who had been settled at Weymouth, accepted a call to the pastorate of the Congregational Church at Methuen when John was about a year old. Here the lad spent the years of his boyhood, receiving his early education partly at Mr. Blaisdell's school in Lawrence, from which he entered Phillips Academy at Andover in 1851, at the age of thirteen, being one of the youngest boys of his class. He was gentle and modest in his deportment, a good classical scholar, and a general favorite in the school.

After finishing his preparatory studies under Dr. Samuel H. Taylor, Phillips entered Harvard College in 1854. In addition to the prescribed work of his class he accomplished a large amount of general reading, and also found time for boat-

ing and other physical exercises which contributed in no small degree to the excellent state of health which he enjoyed at this period. The writer of this communication was his room-mate, and remembers walking with him from Cambridge to Methuen one day during the Thanksgiving recess.

During the winter of his senior year Phillips taught a district school in the town of Bolton, where he had great success both as a teacher and a disciplinarian. Ability in the latter direction was needed, as some of his scholars were older and stronger than himself, and at first inclined to dispute his authority. It is sufficient to say that the young master proved equal to the situation, and not only brought the school under perfect control, but won the respect and good-will of all the members. With this winter's stipend (the first money he ever earned) he bought a wedding present for his eldest sister.

After his graduation with the class of '58, Mr. Phillips went into the brokerage office of his brother-in-law Mr. Alfred B. Hall. While there he attracted the attention of Mr. R. C. Mackay, who offered him a place as clerk in his shipping-house on Union Wharf. Here he soon gained the esteem and confidence of his employer, and the firm advanced him money to enable him to make little ventures in the ships.

In 1860 he was sent out to Calcutta as supercargo on the ship "Union," Captain Norton, and remained there nearly two years as agent, living at No. 55 Radha-Bazaar House in the native quarter. The outbreak of the war in America occasioned him much anxiety, and in 1862 he returned to Boston with the intention of entering the army. But the persuasion of friends, and the thought that, being an only son and his father in delicate health, his first duty lay at home, led him to send a substitute to the war. He afterwards, however, regretted that he had not gone himself.

In 1864 Mr. Phillips was sent to England to sell a vessel, and the following year he formed a partnership with the eldest son of his former employer, under the firm of William Mackay & Co. (afterwards Mackay & Phillips), for the transaction of a general commission business in New York. Soon after this he made two business voyages to Cuba. The new enterprise was fairly remunerative, but not sufficiently so to warrant its continuance many years, and he consequently started the new firm of John C. Phillips & Co., in conjunction with Messrs. Floyd & Stevens, who had been previously associated with him in the Eastern trade. Their dealings were chiefly with China and Manilla. He remained in active business until a few months before his death.

William Phillips, a distant relative, having taken a fancy to him upon a slight acquaintance formed at sea, offered to give him $50,000, saying that if his business was not satisfactory this sum might help him to make it more so. John wrote him in reply that his business was perfectly satisfactory. His generous relative, however, gave him the money, and in addition offered to settle $50,000 more on his wife should he decide to marry. In 1873 this gentleman died unmarried and left our friend a large fortune in trust. He had clung to the old English custom of leaving his property to a male relative bearing the family name. As there was not a Phillips among his first or second cousins, and as his third cousin was John's father, who did not need additional property, he resolved to make his fourth cousin heir to his estate. William Phillips was a Harvard graduate, but had never had a home of his own, having roamed extensively over the world without forming any special friendships or acquaintances. Part of his fortune he had inherited from his father, and part from his cousin Edward Phillips. He died in Santa Cruz, hav-

ing been attended by an English clergyman and the consul, who signed the necessary papers as witnesses.

In 1874, soon after inheriting this fortune, Mr. Phillips sailed for Europe, and was married in London the following year, October 23, to Anna, daughter of Alanson Tucker, Esq., of Boston. The ceremony was performed by Canon Kemp at St. James Church, Piccadilly, in the presence of a few invited guests. On returning to this country Mr. and Mrs. Phillips lived for about a year in New York, and then decided to make Boston their home. Being much interested in agricultural pursuits, Mr. Phillips bought two or three hundred acres near Wenham Lake in North Beverly, and soon converted what had been a barren hillside into a creditable farm. Here on a well-chosen site he built a fine house, in which he was accustomed to spend six months of the year. He also built a handsome winter residence in Boston, on the corner of Berkeley and Marlborough Streets.

It is gratifying to record the fidelity with which Mr. Phillips used the exceptional advantages which fell to his lot. So far from being elated by his fortune, he felt that it was placed in his hands as a sacred trust. He made himself acquainted with the objects of charity which he intended to aid, and then gave liberally. As an educated man he was especially interested in education, and gave large sums to the well-known academies bearing his family name at Andover and Exeter. He was always aiding some relative or friend at school or college. He bought a plantation at the South, partly with the hope of being able to do some good among the negroes there. He was a trustee of Phillips Exeter Academy, the Children's Hospital, the Blind Asylum, and the Peabody Museum. He was also a director of the Union Bank and of the Boston and Albany Railroad.

The native modesty which characterized our friend's boyhood remained with him through life; and many of his good deeds remained unknown. All who knew him would say that he had strong common sense, calm judgment, great self-control, and a cheerful disposition. He was a singularly true, single-minded man, devoid of ostentation, and earnestly desirous to do his duty. His business career was marked by a high sense of honor and the strictest integrity rather than by any bold or brilliant ventures.

Although not long a member of this Society, Mr. Phillips took an interest in its work. His death, which occurred March 1, 1885, was caused by a disease of the heart from which he had suffered for several years, though many of his nearest friends were not aware of it. He left a widow and five children. The accompanying engraving is from a photograph taken ten years before his death.

REMARKS

OF THE

HON. ROBERT C. WINTHROP

AT THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MARCH 12, 1885.

THE death of Mr. Phillips at the early age of forty-six is a subject for real sorrow in our community. With our own Society he had been associated but a few years. A lineal descendant of the Rev. George Phillips, the famous Puritan minister of Watertown in 1630, — the companion and friend of Governor Winthrop, who came over with Winthrop and the Charter, and catechised and preached on board the "Arbella" on the voyage, — he could not fail to take an interest in the earliest history of Massachusetts. I remember his showing me, with pride, an original autograph sermon of that distinguished ancestor and excellent man, when I was visiting him in his beautiful library some years ago. I believe he had other Phillips manuscripts, which we may hope will not be wholly lost to our Collections hereafter.

His later lineage, too, was of a kind to make him observant of whatever contributed to the honor and welfare of our Commonwealth. His family name is associated, as we know, with some of our most celebrated academies and institutions. Andover and Exeter owe their famous schools to the bounty and beneficence of the Phillipses. The Observatory of Harvard

University was principally endowed by one of the same name and blood. The statues which adorn our squares are, many of them, from a Phillips Fund. He himself had given the generous sum of twenty-five thousand dollars to the Phillips Academy at Andover at their centennial celebration in 1878, and an equal amount to the Phillips Exeter Academy on a similar occasion. And it is within my own knowledge that he had supplied most important and liberal pecuniary and personal aid to other institutions, at moments of special need. I was associated with him as one of the Trustees of the Peabody Museum of Archæology and Ethnology at Cambridge, of which he has been the Treasurer for several years past, and to which he has rendered valuable service. I was associated with him, also, in the management of the new Children's Hospital, of whose board he was the Vice-President at his death, and of which he had been a most efficient and liberal supporter.

A graduate of Harvard in the Class of 1858, there are those here who can bear witness to his character as a student, as well as to his worth as a man, better than myself; but I cannot but feel that our community has sustained a great loss in his early death, for which I desire to record my personal sorrow.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS.

From the President of the Board of Trustees of Phillips Exeter Academy.

My regard and affection for him, my confidence in his judgment, and my reliance upon it have steadily increased with our intimacy, since I first shared his nearer acquaintance.

The relation which brought us together — a part as it were of the inheritance which came to him by merit and fitness as well as by race — gave me an opportunity to know and appreciate him, which any ordinary social association would not have given; and I had learned to estimate him so highly as a personal friend, as well as a valued associate, that the loss seems doubly irreparable. His judicious, modest, but manly counsel; his frank and courteous liberality of opinion; his ready and unfailing interest in the duties which he accepted; his conscientious fidelity to them; and his generosity, as unpretending as it was munificent, — are taken from us; and I know not how we can replace them, or how to find united with these excellences the attractive personal qualities which insured affection as well as respect and confidence from all who knew him.

From One who was intimately associated with him in Business.

WHAT I *can* do is to bear witness to the true and noble manliness of his character. It is now many years since I first made his acquaintance, and during a long part of that acquaintance we were in close business relations. From the first to the last of my intimacy with him, I never knew him to act but from the best motives. His character was, above all things, purely unselfish. He was, above all the men I have known, the one the least affected by the outward circumstances of prosperity or adversity; those might change with him, but he never changed, — never altered his calm goodness.

Looking back upon my acquaintance and intercourse with John C. Phillips, I can truly say he was one of the men I am the better from having known; and while I live, the recollection of his friendship will be one of the happy memories of my life.

From One of his Partners.

I HAVE only the pleasantest testimony to bear, and can remember nothing but what was generous and unselfish in all Mr. Phillips's motives and actions. Indeed, I often wondered how patient he could be under annoyances and disappointments that might well have irritated and discouraged him.

I really feel as if my best friend — without the circle of my immediate relations — was gone; and sadly shall I miss the counsel and sympathy which I always relied upon receiving from him.

From the Salem Gazette.

MR. PHILLIPS was modest, kind, and ever thoughtful of the welfare of others. His ample fortune was freely used in unannounced acts of generosity and friendship. His taste for horticulture led him to the establishment of the beautiful

summer home on the borders of Wenham Lake, familiar to every one in this neighborhood, the labor upon which has given employment to many hands. Mr. Phillips was much interested in arboriculture, and was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Archæological Museum at Cambridge. His death will not only be mourned by a large circle of intimate friends, but it will bring sincere regret to all who have ever met him. The community can ill afford to lose one who, possessed of social position and ample fortune, seeks the comfort and happiness of others as often as his own, and who by his quiet, unaffected mode of life is so excellent an example to his fellow-men.

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